

For several reasons I welcome this opportunity to meet with old friends and colleagues in the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges. I continue to view my own involvement in the affairs of the Association with pride and a touch of nostalgia.

Today I will touch principally on a topic which is not new, but which is becoming urgent. I am referring to the development of rural America -- that part of our great nation that lies outside of the metropolitan areas -- that part which encompasses most of our geography and around a third of our people.

The further development of rural America must proceed with speed and dispatch because of the people and the problems that exist there, and also, because of the utter necessity of relieving the population pressures that are growing daily in our large cities.

While rural America is the home for around a third of our people, it contains approximately 60 percent of the sub-standard housing and nearly half of the nation's poor people. These facts, and the conditions associated with them, have accounted for a significant part of the large scale rural-urban migration that has occurred during the past two decades.

It is not enough that we think in terms of improving conditions and opportunity for the people living today in rural America, and thereby stemming the flow of people to the cities. We must do much more. We must make it a matter of urgent national policy that we create in, and around, the smaller cities and towns sufficiently good employment opportunities and living environments that large numbers of families will choose to rear their children there.

Remarks of Secretary of Agriculture Clifford M. Hardin at the Eighty-Third Annual Meeting of the National Association of State Universities and Land-Grant Colleges, LaSalle Hotel, Chicago, Illinois, November 10, 1969.

We are not talking about making the huge cities smaller, but in establishing conditions that will make it unnecessary for the great urban centers to have to somehow absorb most of the 100 million or so new Americans who will arrive during the next 30 years. And that most certainly will happen unless strong positive steps are taken to prevent it.

During the past 20 years the total population has grown by 54 million, and all of the growth has taken place in the metropolitan centers. Think of the problems and the expenses involved if that pattern should continue and an additional 100 million persons were crowded into the existing urban centers in the short span of 30 years.

These are some of the things President Nixon had in mind several weeks ago when he appointed a Task Force for Rural America and requested them to "review the effectiveness of present rural assistance programs, and make recommendations as to what might be done in the private and public sectors to stimulate rural development."

It was recognition of this same set of conditions that prompted the President to announce just four days ago the creation of a Rural Affairs Council within the Cabinet.

In making these moves, the President hopes to establish a national rural policy that will be coordinated with the drive for a new national urban policy that has been underway for several months.

The options are as varied as the face of America. But development of the magnitude that is necessary can come about only with the most energetic and innovative efforts on the part of State and local governments working in close cooperation with persons and corporations in the private sector. The Federal departments and agencies can provide assistance, and hopefully more in the future, but initiative must invariably come from the communities themselves.

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And this is where the State universities and especially the Cooperative Extension Service comes in. These institutions played a vital role in an earlier movement, from East to West as Americans tamed the frontier and built a thriving nation. The acceptance of the mandate to educate the sons and daughters of the working classes may have been the most important component in our country's development and leadership.

In any event, the institutions represented here have long experience in working effectively with people in the private sector and with people in government at all levels. You have great competence in many areas and you enjoy the well-earned confidence of the public. And this is why we call on you now to accept a position of leadership and to lend your efforts and know-how toward a mobilization of the people and the resources of rural America.

Development can occur in many directions. For example, the National Committee on Urban Growth policy -- a non-government group -- recommends Federal assistance in the creation of 100 new cities of 100,000 each and 10 new cities of a million each. That's a large vision! Yet even an effort as enormous as this would provide for only 20 percent of the additional people we expect in the next 30 years.

Perhaps community development can and should be based principally around existing towns and cities, thus gaining the economic advantages of existing institutions and services, existing history, culture, identity, character, and continuity.

In any case, the decisions must be made by people living within the communities and within the States. State and local policies for urban, suburban and rural growth must be decided and promoted at the State and local level.

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Communities which have already exhibited strong growth potential should be helped to develop. When local community leadership and private enterprise have shown the initiative necessary for sound development, government at all levels should be willing to help.

This is in line with a philosophy expressed by President Nixon. He has stated many times his desire for the enhancement of the role and influence of State and local government and he has urged the Federal departments to cooperate fully toward this end. Additionally he has recommended to the Congress the sharing of Federal funds with States and local governments.

While the initiatives are expected to come from the State and communities, it is important that the resources and services of the Federal establishment be properly ordered and directed. The role of the Rural Affairs Council is to provide this sense of direction and to bring with it the dedicated support of the President.

In announcing the Rural Affairs Council, President Nixon said:

"It is a fact of our national life that the concerns of rural America also deserve more careful consideration and more effective coordination at the highest levels of government.

"We are a nation of cities, to be sure, but we are also a nation of small towns and villages, farms and forests, mines and ranches mountains and rivers and lakes. The people who live in rural America have urgent problems which deserve our attention. More importantly, they represent a great resource upon which all of us can draw.

"After an era in which people have moved steadily from the countryside to large and crowded cities, we must now do what we can to encourage a more even distribution of our population throughout our country. The Rural Affairs Council can help our nation to meet this challenge. . . ."

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Those words reflect the President's personal support of a program that goes beyond the idea of "making rural America a better place to live" -- and looks toward major changes in the distribution of population in America -- toward giving Americans a real choice as to where they want to live.

The Rural Affairs Council includes those officers of Cabinet level whose agencies can make a significant contribution to community development. The Council includes:

The President, the Vice President, the Secretary of Agriculture, the Secretary of Health, Education, and Welfare, the Secretary of the Interior, the Director of the Office of Economic Opportunity, the Secretary of Housing and Urban Development, the Secretary of Labor, the Secretary of Commerce, the Director of the Budget and the Chairman of the Council of Economic Advisors.

The Rural Affairs Council will ensure that the government is a full partner, that all the programs that have application to rural America will be brought to bear -- HUD's housing and planning money, Labor Department's training programs, HEW's educational and assistance programs, Commerce Department's economic development projects, the Small Business Administration's funds and guidance, these and many others.

The Council will carry on the closest cooperation with the Urban Affairs Council, and other Federal agencies.

Specifically, the Rural Affairs Council will seek to:

- * Achieve coordination between Federal departments in all matters that may affect rural Americans.

- * Encourage decentralization of government and coordination of programs between the Federal and State and local governments.

- * Encourage the effective utilization of voluntary organizations.

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* Secure up-to-date comprehensive information on the problems that confront rural America. Then identify the causes of those problems and develop solutions, either through existing programs or by initiating new programs.

* Encourage action on a regional, State and local basis.

We will seek to improve the effectiveness and timeliness of delivery of public services to rural America. Still, program responsibilities must remain vested to the greatest possible extent in State and local government.

The recommendations of the President's Task Force on Rural Development should provide guidelines for this work.

Immediately, we will get to work on such problems as:

* The best means of creating new jobs and new economic opportunity to rural America.

* How best to adapt extensive manpower training programs to small towns and rural areas.

* How best to ensure decent housing for more rural people.

Within the Department of Agriculture, we are moving in several ways to meet the challenge that the President has put before us.

We are asking the Federal Extension Service to work closely with the State Extension directors. In turn we are hoping that the Cooperative Extension Services will assume a leadership role in organizing and promoting community interest.

In urging this role for Extension, we are in no way reducing the responsibility of the other agencies of the Department.

Every agency in the Department with a contribution to make to rural development has been directed to provide aggressive leadership in its area, assigning appropriate resources and personnel to the effort.

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We plan to choose a few special project areas in which to concentrate all Federal activities -- areas that represent specific problems in rural America. We expect to learn a lot in those areas that will be useful in the rest of America, both urban and rural.

You know the programs of the Department that are especially important in rural development: the housing, water and sewer loans of the Farmers Home Administration; the small watersheds and resource conservation and development programs of the Soil Conservation Service; the credit potentials of REA and the resource surveys and development programs of the Forest Service. They are most effective when employed in coordination with all other available resources.

The administrators of these agencies, the FHA, SCS, REA, Forest Service, along with the Federal Extension Service, are meeting now as the Departmental Rural Development Committee. As a group, their assignment is to develop the vital policies, programs and priorities necessary for the Department to carry out its rural development mandate.

Dr. Tom Cowden, Assistant Secretary for Rural Development and Conservation, is chairman of this group. He will have a special rural development staff to assist him in program coordination and leadership.

Each member of this committee will be assigned specific liaison responsibilities with other departments of the Federal government, on a similarity-of-service basis. For example, the Farmers Home Administration will assign key men to coordinate with Housing and Urban Development.

Each agency also will be maintaining liaison with national organizations to help make their programs and services more available to rural people and their communities.

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One of the key elements of USDA's rural development organization will be the committees set up in each State by the Director of that State's Cooperative Extension Service. These committees will maintain liaison with State governments, other agencies and whatever organizations are involved in the development of our countryside.

Department members on these committees in each State will be representatives of the Forest Service, Soil Conservation Service, Farmers Home Administration and Rural Electrification Administration. They will provide whatever staff services are needed to support activities of the committee.

These committees will decide what kind of USDA rural development organization should be established on a local basis.

Rural development begins at home. It is the responsibility of State and local organizations, groups and leaders. They will provide the channel through which the people may improve their situations: analyzing their local needs, assessing their local potentialities, matching their community's potential with private and public programs at all levels of government.

The work of the Cooperative Extension Services in these basic activities is obviously essential.

The effective development of America depends upon the Cooperative Extension Service working with public and private agencies at the State, regional and local levels. The Service is invaluable in developing an understanding of the nature of development, and in helping Federal agencies to assist in State and local development activities.

To quote from "A People and a Spirit," our joint report:

"Extension can bring cohesiveness into many community development programs through its role in educational leadership. It can help people obtain the right kind of planning, financing and technical aid from other agencies."

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The role of Extension, which is significant now, will become more so as it trains new personnel to meet modern demands; as it reorganizes to provide a wider variety of experts to serve more people; as the great State Colleges and Land-Grant Universities become even more active in community development.

Again, from "A People and a Spirit":

"Extension's ability to extend the modern land-grant university to the people is limited only by the breadth of the university and Extension's willingness to function university-wide."

Each American has a role to play in determining the destiny of his country -- in creating a fuller more attractive life for everyone -- in both rural and urban America.

Beyond the boundaries of metropolitan America lies a fertile land of beautiful landscape, open space, rich resources and an energetic, proud people.

This rural and small town America offers opportunity and hope for a better life for all of us and our children's children, for those who prefer to live in the country and for those who prefer the city.

We can achieve this better life by joining together in common effort to reach our common and realistic goals.

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